



Needs Assessment, Feasibility, &  
Building Program Study for  
**The County of San Luis  
Obispo**

**Animal Service Division**

**855 Oklahoma Ave**

**San Luis Obispo, CA 93406**



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# I. Scope of Study

This study was authorized by the County of San Luis Obispo in order to accurately examine the current status of the present facility and operations and future shelter building needs for the County . The study takes into account demographic trends, the number of animals handled in recent years, the proposed construction budget, operating budget, operational programs, human population level served, current and future staffing levels and agency objectives and goals.



***Front View of Existing Shelter at 885 Oklahoma Ave. It is In urgent need of renovation, expansion and improvement of the animal holding areas.***

Because this Needs Assessment, Feasibility & Building Program Study focuses on the requirements of a expanded and remodeled building, many factors are examined in detail, including: existing shelter status, site considerations, size of the needed additions, size of the needed facility expansion, type of construction, layout, materials, finishes, areas of program expansion, and construction and operating costs. A complete listing is made of all spaces needed, square footage, special features, special equipment needed, animal capacities, and a projected operating and construction budget for the bigger facility.

The Study will examine the most pressing remodel needs in the current shelter. We will also examine what building additions could be made within the present budget and what other additions may be made at a later date when additional funds are available. A pressing need is to enlarge and improve cat adoption and holding areas and to improve the dog kennels.

A complete listing is made of all spaces needed and square footage based on our discussions with staff and management. Also covered are special features, special equipment needed, animal capacities, a projected operating budget, construction budget and operational considerations. The goal of this Needs Assessment, Feasibility & Building Program Study is to provide the County of San Luis Obispo with all the critical considerations and recommended approaches needed to define the future direction and shelter remodel needs. From this study, a complete long-term building program can be developed in a timely and cost effective manner.

It should be understood this study is the first step in planning the shelter remodel and additions. The second step will be to develop the building floor plan based on this approved Building Program. The third and final step will be development of the working drawings and specifications for competitive bidding.



## **II. Demographics**

### **A. Population, Animal Levels & Programs**

The County of San Luis Obispo Shelter serves a people population of approximately 265,000. This includes the City of San Luis Obispo plus six other cities. The number of stray and owner released unwanted dogs and cats currently handled yearly by the County of San Luis Obispo Shelter is approximately 4,826. This total is composed of approximately 2,346 dogs and 2,480 cats. People population is estimated to grow to approximately 330,000 by the year 2030 which could increase shelter animal numbers to 8,250 for all local shelters.

We estimate the number of animals normally generated yearly from the area population of 265,000 to be 2.5% of the human population. (Nationally the proportion runs between 3% and 4%.) This would translate into potentially 6,625 animals turned into all of the local shelters annually. Since the County of San Luis Obispo Shelter handles about 4,826 animals yearly it means the other shelters and organizations in the County are handling approximately 1,799 animals per year. This would include the Woods Humane Society, the North County Humane Society (cats only) in Atascadero and HART in Cambria.

The underlying overpopulation of pets is caused by irresponsible pet ownership and uncontrolled breeding of pets. Although animal overpopulation is beginning to come down nationwide due to remedial programs, it can be countered by increasing human population in San Luis Obispo and a public not acting as responsible pet owners.



***As cute as these puppies are, irresponsible pet ownership and uncontrolled breeding results in about 589 animals being euthanized each year at the County of San Luis Obispo shelter.***

Of the animals presently received by the County of San Luis Obispo Shelter, approximately 57% (2,751) are adopted directly or turned over to Woods Humane Society for adoption, 17% (838) are returned to their owners and 12% (589) are euthanized of the total number of animals received. It should be noted that the above figures total 4,178 animals rather than the stated animal intake of 4,826. This difference of 648 animals should be examined by the shelter management to determine where the discrepancy occurs. The number of adoptions is very good (with the help of Woods Humane Society), the number of returns to owners is about average when compared to other similar sized shelters. Many modern, visitor friendly shelters around the country today have adoption rates of 40 - 60%, return to owner rates of 10 - 20% and euthanasia rates of 20 - 45%.

With a remodeled, more visitor friendly facility, the County of San Luis Obispo will be able to strengthen its programs to increase visitors and adoptions to higher levels, increase returns of lost dogs and cats to owners and strengthen its preventative and remedial programs.

Examples of important critical preventative programs are: strict follow through on spay/neuter for adopted pets, low cost spay neuter programs for the general public, free collar and ID tag program for all pets, owner education, foster pet homes, pet health and behavior rehabilitation, counselling for pet owners with problems keeping their pets, progressive, responsible owner ordinances, a well designed local web-site for animal adoptions and lost animal identification, use of web based adoptions such as Petfinders.com and ongoing, well promoted, shelter adoption programs including expanded evening and weekend hours.

## **B. Current Number of Staff & Operating Budget**

The present animal shelter and animal control staff consists of twenty one staff positions as follows:

### **ANIMAL SHELTER STAFFING:**

1. Animal Service Manager
2. Shelter Supervisor
3. Registered Vet Technician
4. Kennel Worker
5. Kennel Worker
6. Kennel Worker

- 7. Humane Education
- 8. ACO Supervisor
- 9. Lead ACO
- 10-15 ACO
- 16. Administrative Service Officer
- 17. Senior Account Clerk
- 18-21 Administrative Assistants

The full time staffing level is average levels compared to most shelters across the Country handling approximately the same number of animals. Normal staffing levels would be between 20 and 25 positions for a shelter handling 4,826 animals per year (including animal control).

The present annual total operating budget is \$2,600,000. The average cost per animal handled is \$539 based on 4,826 animals and the \$2,600,000 total operational budget. Nationally, most animal shelter operational budgets range between \$250 and \$500 per animal . The County of San Luis Obispo shelter budget is presently in the upper range.



## III. Current Building Status

### A. Conditions and Capacities



***View of the front public receiving lobby showing a very cramped and limited area for the public and transactions***

The present original shelter was built in 1972 and is approximately 37 years old. The present facility contains approximately 9,925 square feet. The administrative areas of the building are in generally good condition although the public reception area is minimum. The entrance for the public into the dog kennels is problematic in that they must go back outside (from reception desk) and then ask for the kennel door to be unlocked before entering the kennels. Kennels should be open and easily accessed by the public during business hours.

The shelter currently has 48 dog runs plus 8 quarantine runs and 2 isolation runs. The kennels are built as an indoor/outdoor design.

In the cat areas there are a total of 3 cat rooms plus isolation and quarantine areas. Total cat cages number about 75. Unfortunately, when these rooms were built in 1996, there was little concern about making them visitor friendly. For instance, no windows were put in

these spaces and no cat community areas were included.



***The cat rooms are not very inviting to the public.***

The dog kennels are built with little provision for noise control, there is also an undesirable gutter style drainage design, plus poor floor and wall finishes. The kennels have the look of an industrial

warehouse. This is exactly the opposite of the welcoming, pleasant look needed to encourage the public to visit for adoptions and returns.



***Kennels are noisy and unpleasant for the public to visit.***

Generally, the building was not very well laid out for its purpose as an animal shelter. The dog kennels were not designed for ease of cleaning and maintaining the animals. Staff are making every effort to maintain and operate the shelter in the best way possibly. They should be congratulated for a good job being done with an older, inadequate building.

The building lacks good circulation and flow patterns for the staff and public. The entrances for public visitors and animal receiving are not well defined and create additional work for staff and confusion for the public. The shelter was built with average quality materials and finishes.

The cooling, heating and ventilation systems are outdated and are not providing the needed fresh air exchange and air purification for the animal's health protection. Typically, unless a shelter is designed by specialists, the HVAC systems will not be engineered for the special health needs of animals.

Another area of concern with the present facility is the night drop boxes for animals. Most new shelters today do not use night drops as they encourage the public to leave animals without discussing with the shelter staff why they are disposing of the animal and what alternate solutions they might consider. Additionally, animals are

often dropped off without adequate information about recent bites, health or behavior conditions.



***The present night drop box is located on the left of the building. This type of system is not used by most new shelters being built today.***

A better solution is to have one staff person on duty in the evening until 10 or 12 p.m. This staff position can be rotated each week among shelter staff. The person would come in around 4 p.m. and be responsible for feeding any infant animals at night, some night time kennel pick-up of feces, monitoring any sick animal, receiving any pets being brought in at night, answering phone calls and responding to any injured animal emergency. (To respond to emergencies, they would lock up and leave a sign on the door stating their return time.)

The kennels are at present generally locked to the public. In a remodelled building, we would urge allowing the public to view all kennels to maximize identification of lost animals by friends or neighbors and to facilitate the possible adoption of strays after their holding period. In the expanded building, isolation kennels will protect the public but still allow the animals to be viewed through windows for identification.

Cat adoption and stray cat holding rooms should allow the public to view and interact with the cats. Disease is spread more by contaminated air and surfaces than by human touch. Even if a shelter prohibits the public from touching animals, the staff must handle the animals throughout the day, eliminating any benefit from preventing the public from interacting. The animals need touch and attention from people and the public wants to interact and fall in love with the pets.



Part of the challenge and difficulty in expanding the current building is to develop a layout that will provide the spaces the shelter needs in such a way that everything works together as if the building was designed as a whole. With the long experience of Shelter Planners of America, we can resolve many of the problems with the present layout.



***This view shows the public corridor. New cat condos and exotic built in displays can be remodelled along the left wall with new ceiling and finishes to improve appearance.***



## IV. Recommendations for an Expanded Shelter

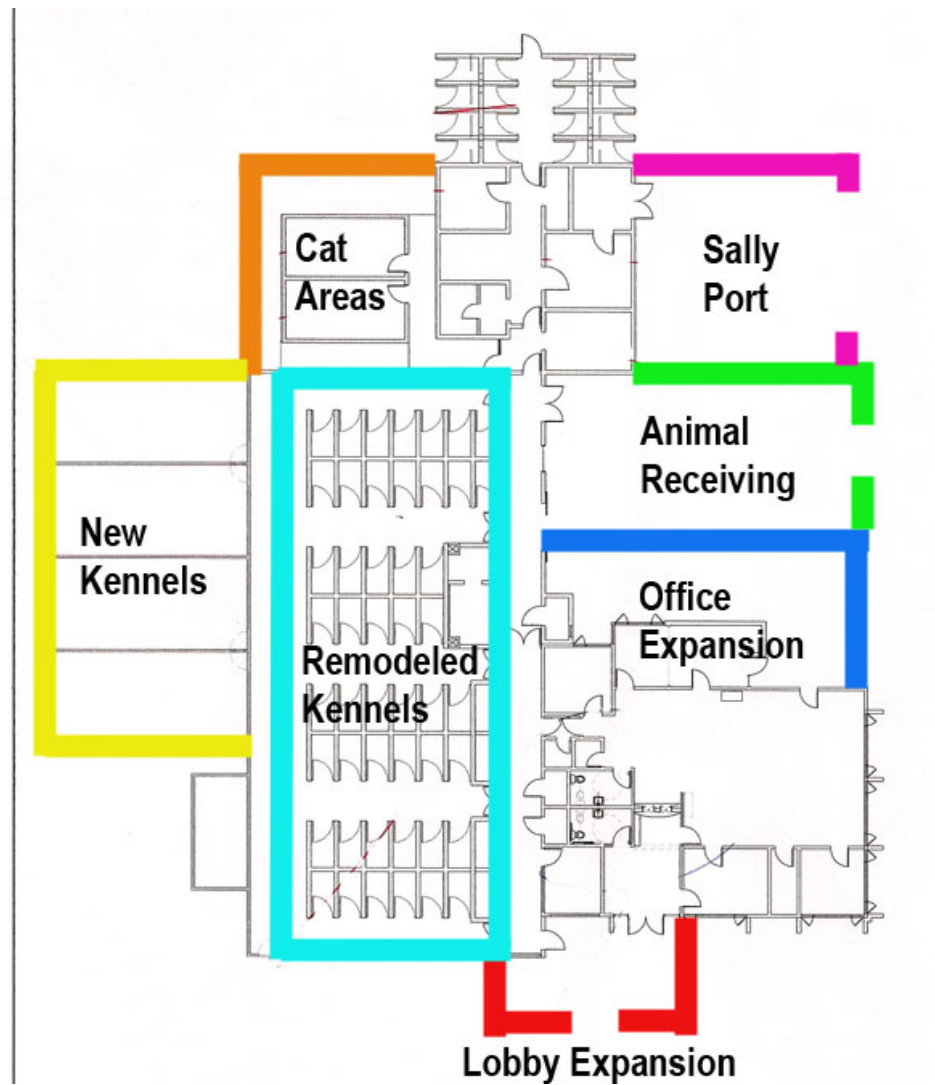
### A. Site Considerations

The suggested additions to the County of San Luis Obispo animal control shelter will be attached to the present structures and utilize the present site. We are suggesting a new kennel addition on the left of the building. There is also a suggested new cat wing on the left, holding the new cat community rooms and cage adoption rooms. The driveway to the rear of the building will need to be retained. The new cat wing will allow the front office and public lobby to be expanded and have natural window light and a view.



***The suggested new animal intake area can be created in the right side area that presently contains the sally port.***

The County of San Luis Obispo has a relatively large site but limited in building area due to poor soil conditions. Nearly military installation behind the site also limits expansion to the rear. Because of the shelter location off the highway, we would suggest new larger highway signs be installed at appropriate intersections to help identify the shelter.



***Building plan showing proposed expansion of the Public Lobby, Cat Adoption Rooms, new Dog Kennels and remodeling of the old original dog kennel***

## B. Design Concept

We are suggesting seven separate remodeling phases for the County of San Luis Obispo to consider. This will allow the County to examine and select each area that needs remodeling and factor in the estimated related costs. The desired remodeled areas can either be combined into one project that falls within the current building budget, or remodeled areas can be done one at a time as money is available. We are listing the phases in order of what we feel is the highest priority.

**1. The first phase** is a 694 square foot expansion and remodel of the Front Public Lobby. We have given this phase the number one priority, not because it is more important than the cat and dog areas remodel, but because this area is a significant flaw in the present building design and need to be corrected to maximize the number of visitors and adoptors. This addition would extend the front lobby outwardly and enclose the current exterior entrance door to the kennel and cat rooms thereby allowing it to remain unlocked, accessible and welcoming to the visiting public. It will also expand the public waiting area and will have space to accommodate a pet supply sales alcove. The staff/public work counter will expand from the present 8' long to 18' long. Moving the counter location forward 24 feet will create an additional 312 square feet of usable open office area.



***This photo shows a similar 18 foot long counter and how the new longer public transaction counter can look once the expanded front lobby is completed.***

**2. The second phase** will be a complete demolition and rebuild of the two present cat rooms added 12 years ago. This new addition will be enlarged from the present 598 square feet to a new cat wing of 1,400 square feet. This cat adoption wing will house 2 large cat community rooms with sun porches, 1 kitten community room with sun porch, stray cat cage room, cat adoption cage room, cat isolation room, feral cat room, support spaces and a cat get acquainted room. This new cat wing will be open and airy with glass store fronts looking into the rooms plus large glass windows to bring in sunlight and natural views.





***A view into a cat community room similar to what is proposed. The room has a glass storefront plus large windows for plenty of sunlight. Cats have furniture, plants and play toys to make their shelter stay healthy and homelike.***

A second, more extensive option for the new cat wing would be to relocate it where the present sally port is now. In this option, a new animal intake and receiving area and additional offices would be combined with the cat wing for a new addition of approximately 2,100 square feet. The crematorium, freezer and sally port intake areas would be moved further to the back of the building on the same right side.

**3. A third phase** will be the remodeling of the present 4,500 square foot dog kennels and corridor. This updating will include new, water resistant acoustical tile ceilings to quiet the kennels. The clearstory skylights will remain as they are. New, flush fluorescent lighting installed in the ceiling to keep the kennels bright even on cloudy days. New epoxy floor and wall finishes will be installed in each dog kennel, new automatic waterers installed in each kennel plus new

stone look, porcelain tile kennel corridor floors, for ease of cleaning, sanitation and a fresh, welcoming look. Three new large windows will be installed in the front kennel wall to bring in a nice outdoor view for the public as they first enter the dog kennels. The present heavy wooden sliding barn doors will be removed and replaced with glass store front walls and self closing glass doors (or sliding glass doors if preferred). New sliding aluminum kennel gates will be installed and a new central HVAC duct system to provide needed air exchange, cooling and heat. (The kennel presently has no effective heat and no cooling.)



***Example of new kennels in a remodeled shelter. Notice the sliding aluminum gates, the high lighting levels and sound absorbing ceiling.***

The main public corridor leading by the kennels to the cat areas will also be updated with a new acoustical tile ceiling, new wall finishes and new stone look tile floor, new lighting and new aluminum

framed glass store front doors leading into the kennels. These doors will reduce barking noise coming from the kennels. With the corridor isolated from barking noise, the small rooms along the left of the corridor can be remodeled as cat condos (which can hold 2 to 4 cats each), small mammals cages and reptile holding cages.

**4. The forth phase is a new indoor/outdoor dog kennel addition** on the left side of the building. This new kennel will consist of two kennel wings (holding 12 kennels each) approximately 880 square feet each for a total of 1,760 square feet. These new indoor/outdoor kennels will occupy the outdoor area that now holds the exercise yards thereby requiring relocating the exercise yards to the opposite side of the building. There will be a new fresh air HVAC system to serve each kennel wing. The new addition will have "natural stone look" tile corridor floors, new epoxy floors within each dog pen, new sound absorbing ceilings and high level lighting and new aluminum sliding gate kenneling.



***This view shows how the new indoor/outdoor kennels could look. There would be a raised outdoor planter rather than the lawn area shown in this photo.***

**5. Phase five will be a new animal intake/receiving addition.**

This addition will be located in half of what is currently the sally port. The addition will be approximately 1,050 square feet and will include a public intake lobby and office, a dog receiving room, a cat receiving room, clinic room, temperament testing room and support spaces.

**6. Phase six will be a new administrative addition.** This phase will logically connect with phase five, the animal intake/receiving phase. The addition will be approximately 1,050 square feet and will include four new offices (Shelter Supervisor, Vet Tech, ACO Supervisors Office, Volunteer Coordinator).

**7. Phase seven includes relocating the sally port.** This phase will logically connect with phase five and six, the animal intake/receiving and administrative addition phases. The new sally port area will be approximately 1,925 square feet and will include the present crematorium and freezer.

## **C. Interior Features**

Shelters built in the past did not have the advantage of using many of the new innovative materials and equipment available only in recent years. Animal shelters of today are no longer just "warehouse structures" with cages lined down the walls. Shelters are very specialized buildings which are more like shopping malls than warehouses in construction. A high level of quality is needed



if the facility is to be able to keep animals healthy, display them in attractive settings and hold up under heavy daily cleaning and wear.

The overall goal is to make the shelter a place where employees feel positive and the public enjoys visiting for pet adoption, pet retrieval and other animal services. Most importantly, the shelter must house animals in the healthiest, least stressful manner possible.

The County of San Luis Obispo shelter remodel should be planned to include central washing equipment, central animal watering systems, flushing floor drains, air purification systems, heated kennel floors, noise control systems and long-lasting, easily cleaned and disinfected wall and floor finishes. Following are examples of some of the special equipment that will be used in the new remodeled shelter:



#### ***A System You Can Count On***

The washing stand alone wall mounted system is designed for small to medium sized operations and is perfect for high volume cleaning jobs.

Versatile, economical and powerful, this system can be customized to fit your sanitizing needs via a wide range of accessories. Plus, because the washing wall mounted station is attached directly to the wall, it is a very secure system to use in a wide variety of locations.

Each wall-mount system features sturdy, non-corrosive stainless steel construction, and the vacuum formed ABS covers come solid (for pump fed chemicals) or indented (for gravity fed chemicals). The stainless steel hose reel can hold up to 75 feet (22.9 m) of hose.



***Central pressure washing equipment allows the animal areas to be cleaned and disinfected in one very rapid process.***



### KENNEL FLOOR FINISH

**DESCRIPTION**  
Fine, colored quartz aggregates are encapsulated in crystal clear epoxy resins to produce the decorative Ceramic Carpet flooring systems. During installation clear resins flood over firmly bonded, multi-colored granules filling depressions and glazing peaks providing a rich "depth" to the speckled finished appearance. A textured surface profile results offering excellent skid-inhibiting properties while remaining easy to clean and maintain.

Ceramic Carpet is available in two basic types: #400 which may be installed at 1/16"-1/8" and #425 which is always 1/8" but allows for faster project turnaround.

**USE**  
The textured finish of the Ceramic Carpet systems make them ideal for showers, restrooms lockers where skid-inhibition under wet conditions is essential. Other such areas include kitchens, food service, laboratories, animal housing or laundry facilities. Ceramic Carpet is also well suited for any number of other "people" areas in commercial, institutional or industrial facilities. These include lobbies, corridors, showrooms, classrooms, vending areas and even manufacturing where an aesthetically pleasing flooring system is desired.

**KEY BENEFITS**

- Multi-colored, speckled look of fine, granular quartz aggregate in clear resins that won't show soil.
- High wear and abrasion resistance.
- Uniform skid-inhibiting surface.
- Seamless, easy to clean and maintain.
- Simple installation for fast project turnaround.




#310 Bramble	#316 Oriental Spice
#311 Buccaneer	#317 Pumpkin Spice
#312 Cinnamon	#318 Salt de Pepper
#313 Flintrock	#319 Sand Point
#314 Forest Green	#320 Taco Red
#315 Gray Fox	#321 Tropical Blue

**The special trowel on kennel floor finish comes in an attractive array of earth tone colors to make kennels cheerful and bright. It also halts bacteria growth.**



## Insulated Pet Doors

### GUILLOTINE COMBO

**The Only Insulated Pet Door/Guillotine Combo On The Market PERIOD.....**

**Simply the best Pet Door on the Market!**



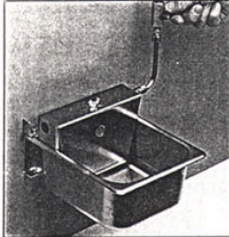

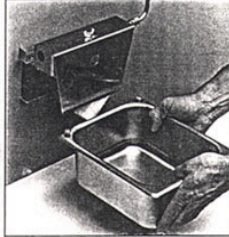
- HEAVILY INSULATED FOR ALL EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS** Pet Doors are insulated with high-density polystyrene and faced with .050 satin anodized aluminum. The 6.49 R Factor in the Combo Unit will maintain a 40° temperature difference in extreme weather conditions.
- HEAVY-DUTY FRAME CONSTRUCTION WITH DOUBLE ACTING HINGE** Heavy duty extruded aluminum frame that will not rust, crack or chip. Door closes automatically with a double acting concealed hinge.
- COMPETITIVE ATTRACTIVE FUNCTIONAL** Competitively priced with other Pet Doors and Guillotines on the market; however, the purchaser is receiving 200-300% more in value. The Pet Door/Guillotine Combo will improve the appearance of the kennel and is maintenance free.

**Shelter Planners of America uses special Guillotine doors that prevent loss of heated or cooled air from the kennel.**

**MODEL 1200**

**AUTOMATIC KENNEL WATERER**

DRINKING BOWL CLEANS FAST AND EASY

1. A quick 1/4 turn of optional water line valve shuts off water flow.

2. Slide latch bar with thumb to release the stainless steel drinking bowl.

3. The drinking bowl disconnects from the wall bracket and lifts out from under the float valve. Takes less than 10 seconds.

**Provides a constant supply of fresh water. Eliminates the time-consuming task of refilling water bowls. Saves on the expense of replacing damaged water bowls. Conserves water.**

***Each animal Kennel is equipped with an automatic waterer so that animals always have fresh water available with no staff time required refilling bowls.***

**THE "WET" SHOWERBATH**



**CITED THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRY  
AS A MAJOR GROOMING BREAKTHROUGH**

**Our Most Popular Tub.**

Now you can have a free-standing tub, walk-up ramp, and backslash in one. The roll-in/roll-out ramp with sure footing provides easy access to tub. From the bottom of the ramp the animal has a good view inside, so they have a good idea where they are going. This tub will accommodate breeds up to 300 lbs. Now made with a full 18 gauge stainless steel liner. Standard features include an easy removable plexiglass door, roll-in/roll-out walk-in ramp, four eye-hooks installed in backslash, built-in hair strainer, stopper, faucet, sprayer, hose, and hose hook. Outside surface is finished in your color choice of 8 easy-to-care-for laminates. (See color chart on back cover.)

**OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT:**  
Upper and lower cabinets with sliding doors, upgrade hair trap, floor hydro tub rack and upgrade faucet. (See pages 6, 7, 8).

MODEL NO.	DIMENSIONS	
WET	TUB ONLY	58" H x 48" L x 24" W x 15" D Ramp extends 41" off front edge of tub
480W	OPTIONAL OVERHEAD and LOWER CABINETS	16" H x 48" W x 12" D

***The Shelter will have a professional grooming tub that animals can be walked into through a swinging door.***





***Dog Kennels with upper half in tempered glass allows a clear view of the dogs as the public walks through.***



***These new style cat cages have individual litter box compartments and positive air exhaust from each cage.***

There are a number of design considerations which must be incorporated into the County of San Luis Obispo shelter remodel and additions in order for it to be a success. These concern how animals are received and housed, how the building is cleaned and disinfected, how heat, ventilation and air exchange are provided, and how public circulation and work traffic patterns are organized. Some specific decisions that must be addressed by the County of San Luis Obispo are:

**A. Kennel function** - It must be decided whether the kennels are to be joint or single occupancy and how the animals will be moved to allow daily cleaning. In the present kennels, animals must be individually moved to outdoor exercise runs during cleaning. The floor drainage system is also an important owner decision. In the new kennel addition, we recommend new floors sloped to individual drains and elimination of shared drains which are difficult to clean and cause sanitation and animal health concerns. In the existing kennels, we would install new sound absorbing ceiling, new high level recessed lighting, install the new sliding gates, and new epoxy flooring in each dog kennel and natural "stone look" tile flooring finishes in the kennel walkways.



***New Cat Condo adoption rooms can be opened up with view windows from public corridors.***

**B. Cat Quarters** - We have found that cat community display areas (cat community rooms or condos) can greatly increase cat adoptions. However, cats housed together must have been health checked and vaccinated prior to being placed together. Cat cages can have special air exhaust in each cage to control odors and stop spread of air borne disease.

**C. Small Breed & Puppy areas** - It is normally desirable to have some puppy and small breed holding separate from the adult kennels for improved disease control. The present shelter has no separate puppy holding. If phases 5 & 6 are undertaken, this could be an opportunity to include a puppy room.



## **D. Animal Capacity**

Currently about 2,346 dogs are handled per year with 48 indoor runs, 8 quarantine runs and 2 isolation runs. This present holding number results in an average 7 to 8 day stay per dog (1 dog per run, not counting quarantine and isolation). With the remodeling being suggested and the new 24 kennel wing added, the shelter would have a new total of 72 holding for an average stay of 10 to 11 days. These added pens would allow the shelter to hold more animals and maintain a less crowded condition in the kennels. It is advisable to maintain a few empty runs in the kennels each day to accommodate new incoming animals.

Currently about 2,480 cats are handled per year with a 75 total holding capacity. The present Cat housing room 1 holds 18 cats, housing room 2 holds 24, cat housing room 3 holds 21 cats, 6 in isolation, 6 in quarantine. This capacity results in a 9 to 10 day average stay per cat (1 cat per cage) not including isolation and quarantine. The new cat wing will expand holding to 85-95 cats resulting in an average of 13 day stay.

One concern we have is whether lost cats are being viewed by the general public? If the public is allowed to view all lost cats, sometimes a neighbor will identify someone else's cat allowing the owner to be notified. Having open stray rooms and kennels means a greater possibility that someone visiting the shelter will see their lost cat.

## E. Proposed Spaces for New & Remodeled Areas

Following are the suggested square footage the remodeled animal control shelter designed to meet the needs of the County of San Luis Obispo (\*Spaces shown in red are totally new addition square footage. \*Spaces shown in green are remodeled or relocated.

### PHASE ONE, FRONT PUBLIC LOBBY:

* Addition to front Public Lobby	694 sf
* Remodeled Front Office (behind counter )	<u>312sf</u>
Sub Total	1,006 sf

### PHASE TWO, NEW CAT WING:

* New Cat Wing to include 2 cat community rooms,	
* kitten community room, stray cat room,	
* cat adoption room, cat observation room,	
* cat get acquainted room, support spaces	
	<u>1400 sf</u>
Sub Total	1,400 sf

### PHASE THREE, DOG KENNEL REMODEL:

*Remodeled Dog Kennel (48 kennels)	3,630 sf
*Remodeled exotic display and cat condos in corridor	170 sf
*Remodeled Public Corridor	<u>700 sf</u>
Sub Total	4,500 sf

### PHASE FOUR, NEW INDOOR/OUTDOOR DOG KENNEL:

* New indoor/outdoor dog kennel - 2 wings (24 runs),	1,760 sf
(exterior runs)	(960) sf
*cleaning equipment storage	60 sf
* mechanical equipment rooms (2)	120 sf
* get acquainted room	<u>60 sf</u>
Sub Total	2,000 sf
(exterior)	(960) sf

### PHASE FIVE, NEW ANIMAL INTAKE/RECEIVING:

* new public intake lobby and receiving,	
* dog receiving, cat receiving,	
* clinic, temperment testing, support spaces,	
	<u>1,050 sf</u>
Sub Total	1,050 sf

### PHASE SIX, NEW ADMINISTRATION ADDITION:

* new offices: Shelter Supervisor, Vet Tech,	
* ACO Supervisor, Volunteer Coordinator,	
	<u>1,050 sf</u>
Sub Total	1,050 sf

### PHASE SEVEN, NEW SALLY PORT:

- \* covered parking for two vehicles,
- \* relocated crematorium and freezer

	(1,925 sf)
Sub Total	(1,925 sf)

TOTAL NEW ADDITION INTERIOR SQUARE FOOTAGE	6,194 SF
TOTAL NEW EXTERIOR SQUARE FOOTAGE (RUNS)	(2,885) SF
TOTAL REMODELED SQUARE FOOTAGE	4,812 SF

## F. Preliminary Estimated Construction Budget for a Remodeled and Expanded Shelter

Following are construction estimates for an expanded and remodeled shelter facility of approximately 4,812 sf existing remodeled, 6,194 sf new additions, plus 2,885 sf of new exterior areas. These estimates are based on costs we are seeing in other similar areas around the Country.

### Phase One, New Front Public Lobby -

694 sf @ \$245 sf Addition to Public Lobby	\$170,275
312 sf @ \$20 sf Remodel area behind counter	\$6,240

**Phase Two, New Cat Wing -**

1,400 sf @ \$265 sf Cat & Kitten Community Rooms stray cats, adoption  
cats, observation, get acquainted and support spaces \$371,000

**Phase Three, Remodel Dog Kennel -**

3,630 sf @ \$60 sf Remodeling of 48 dog kennel \$217,800  
170 sf @ \$50 sf Remodel exotic and cat condos \$8,500  
700 sf @ 50 sf Remodel of Public Corridor \$28,000

**Phase Four, New Indoor/Outdoor Dog Kennel -**

1,760 sf @ \$275 sf 24 new dog kennels \$484,000  
(960 sf) @ \$55 sf (exterior) 24 runs (\$52,800)

**Phase Five, New Animal Intake/Receiving-**

1,050 sf @ \$265 new intake lobby, dog & cat receiving, clinic, temperament  
testing and support spaces \$278,250

**Phase Six, New Administrative Addition -**

1,050 sf @ \$245 sf Four new offices \$257,250

**Phase Seven, New Sally Port-**

1,925 sf @ \$55 sf (exterior) New covered parking, relocate crematorium  
and freezer (\$101,875)

**TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION FOR PHASE 1 THROUGH 3 : \$801,818**

**Site work, permits, A&E Fees add 20% \$160,363**

**TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION FOR PHASE 4 THROUGH 7:\$1,174,175**

**Site work, permits, A&E Fees add 20% \$234,835**



## **G. Facility Staffing**

For an expanded shelter operation (phase 1 through 3) of 12,019 square feet, handling 4,800 to 6,000 animals per year, there will be a need to employ sufficient staff to operate the additional 2,094 sq. ft. larger shelter and maintain the animals in a proper manner.

The most important job for any shelter, is to provide the very best care for the animals in its possession. Because of this, we feel the animal care staff should be well trained employees who have the greatest concern for the animal's welfare as their overriding motivation rather than serving court ordered time. We feel inmate assistance should be used (if at all) for backup to trained kennel staff and under immediate, continued supervision.

Recommended staffing for the shelter facility based on average staffing levels of similar sized shelters around the Country. This listing is to allow shelter management to review a typical staffing level for shelters of this size, not to suggest specific changes in staffing:

### **POSITIONS:**

1. Director
2. Director's Assistant
2. Office Manager
3. Bookkeeping
4. - 6. Receptionist, Animal Returns and Adoptions
7. Humane Educator

- 8. Kennel Manager
- 9. Veterinarian
- 10. Vet Technician
- 11. - 15. Animal Care Staff
- 16. ACO Supervisor
- 17. - 22. ACO positions
- 23. Building Maintenance

## **V. Operational Considerations**

With any proposed remodeled shelter there are a number of operational considerations which can impact the design of the building. These considerations include policies about how many and how long to hold animals, how animals are displayed, spay neuter programs, pet ID programs, temperament testing programs, shelter hours and adoption programs, night drop boxes, satellite adoption locations, return to owner procedures, education programs, etc. All of these and other operational programs will require certain size and type spaces and rooms. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider the impact of present operational procedures as well as alternate approaches as the building remodel is being planned. Some of these relevant topics are discussed in the following section.

### **A. Will Holding More Animals, For Longer Periods Of Time, Increase Adoptions?**

The question is often asked, "If we hold more animals for longer times won't more be adopted?" The two following examples can

help shelter staff, the public and management understand this frequently misunderstood question.

Before we examine the questions however, we want to emphasize the importance of all healthy animals being provided as long a stay as is reasonable. As long as animals are emotionally and physically healthy, it is reasonable to extend their stay. However, dogs (or cats) should not be kenneled so long that it adversely affects their behavior, causing emotional depression, withdrawal, pacing, spinning, barking and aggression (can frequently occur if held beyond about 4 weeks).

**NOTE:**

**(A shelter may hold a selected animal an extended period of time and finally get it adopted, but other animals are being euthanized to allow that one animal to occupy its cage longer. This is the scenario that causes people to think incorrectly, "If we could just hold all animals longer, they would all eventually be adopted".)**

This issue often becomes confusing for many people when trying to understand the value (or lack thereof) of building bigger and bigger shelters and holding more animals for longer periods. The following examples will help facilitate understanding:

1. In the first example, assume the shelter holds animals an average of TWO weeks each during a one year period. During the year, 175 people per month visit with the intention to adopt a pet. How many animals could be adopted in that year? If every visitor adopted, you would adopt 2,100 animals.

Now, assume the shelter kept every animal FOUR weeks (twice as long) during a one year period. The same 175 people per month visited with the intention to adopt a pet. How many animals could be adopted in a year? If every visitor adopted, the shelter would still adopt 2,100 animals. As can clearly be seen, holding animals longer, by itself, does not affect the number adopted.



***It is important that shelter staff make an informed decision of how many animals to hold at any given time and how long to hold each animal.***

2. In this second example, the shelter holds about 100 animals available for adoption at all times. The same 175 people visit per month with the intention to adopt a pet. How many will be adopted in one year? If every visitor adopts, the shelter will have 2,100 adoptions in one year.

Now, assume the County of San Luis Obispo builds a shelter with twice as many kennels, holding about 200 animals at all times, how many will then be adopted? If all of the 175 visitors adopted, the shelter would still adopt 2,100 animals. As can be seen, holding twice as many animals does not affect the number adopted.

The conclusion of these examples is this: The only factor that truly affects the number of animals the shelter adopts is the number of people who visit your shelter with the intention of adopting. Holding animals longer and holding many more animals does not significantly increase adoptions.

TO INCREASE ADOPTIONS, YOU MUST INCREASE THE NUMBER OF VISITORS (WHO WANT TO ADOPT). This is done through a good visible shelter location, visibility of all animals in the shelter, expanded weekend and evening hours, assistance from pet adoption organizations, web-site pet listings, an attractive welcoming shelter, well groomed and healthy animals, friendly staff, adoption requirements that are not too restrictive, reasonably low adoption fees, promotion of adoptions in all local media, satellite adoption locations, special adoption events, etc.

A certain percentage (about 40%) of homes in the San Luis Obispo County area will always own pets, no shelter can appreciably lower or raise that number. Euthanasia of surplus animals will never reduce that number as more animals will be acquired. The goal is to have as many locally owned pets be adopted from the shelter as possible (spayed and neutered) which will reduce the future number of surplus, and unwanted animals.

### **B. Closed Stray Kennels Increase Euthanasia and Reduce Adoptions.**

The San Luis Obispo County shelter has a return to owner rate of about 17% of total animals received. Many new shelters are able to reach 20% return to owner rates.



The public should have free access to all stray holding areas (except isolation or quarantine). Some shelters don't allow this because of concern that illness may be conveyed or the animals have not been temperament tested and someone might be bitten, or a person may claim an animal that is not theirs or become interested in adopting an animal that will not be qualified for adoption. Although these are valid issues, there will be ways (in a remodeled building) to deal with these issues and still allow lost animals the benefits of being seen by the general public.

Consider the following points:

Often, when the general public is looking through stray animal areas, they will identify a neighbor's or friend's pet and be able to advise the shelter staff as to whom the pet belongs. Eliminating that possibility can lead to the euthanasia of the owned pet rather than the return to its owner.

Sometimes an owner of a lost animal will visit the shelter without explaining they lost an animal, or they tell the staff that they "just want to look at the animals". They walk through the open kennels looking for their animal, not knowing the strays are isolated out of view. They will leave, thinking their pet is not there and the animal may be euthanized as a result.

When an animal shelter prevents any stray animal from being seen by the general public, this also reduces the number of opportunities that could lead to an animal's adoption. Failing to give each animal the maximum exposure to the adopting public can lead to that animal being euthanized rather than finding a good, new home.

The attention and human touch the animals need and the opportunity the public wants most, is to interact and fall in love with a new pet. The animals, of course, benefit from receiving attention, a kind word and a caring touch. An example of this problem is seen in pet stores (where pets are isolated behind glass, not allowing the public to touch them) they often have depressed animals who lay in a cage corner not even responding to tapping on the glass.

**Several reasons are given by shelters for the procedure of keeping the general public restricted from stray kennels. Lets examine each stated reason and consider an better alternate solution.**

**Situation:** Shelter staff are concerned that someone may claim an animal that is not theirs.

**Solution:** No animal should be returned to an owner without proof of ownership in the form of one of the following: dog license, vet confirmation or records, photographs or bill of sale. In absence of these (or in addition to them) the shelter staff can observe how the animal responds to the person claiming to be the owner. Usually, the animal will react excitedly when they see their owner. Finally, if need be, the shelter staff could require the person claiming the pet to obtain a notarized statement, signed by two witnesses, stating they have knowledge the dog belongs to the person claiming the pet.

**Situation:** The animals may have illness or have not been temperament tested and the public may be bitten by an animal in the stray kennel causing problems obtaining liability insurance.

**Solution:** Any animal that is ill, frightened or aggressive should be placed in an isolation kennel (where the public can see through

view windows for identification) but not come in contact with the animal. Rarely do friendly animals bite visitors in shelters. Competent staff can usually tell, as soon as an animal arrives, if it is friendly or frightened and aggressive. This first observation does not require more extensive temperament testing. If the insurance company is advised that bite cases and aggressive animals are kept out of contact with the public, the insurer is normally satisfied.



***These type of Observation kennels, viewable by the public through glass corridor windows, allows ill dogs, bite cases and unfriendly animals to be seen but not touched by the public.***

**Situation:** The staff may be burdened with having to tell the public a certain animal is not ready for adoption.

**Solution:** The staff can list the possible adopters name and phone on the animal's record. The prospective adopter can be told if the animal is not returned to its owner, and is in good health, it will be available on a certain day. If the interested party returns on that day they can apply for the animal and, if approved, adopt the animal.

The shelter tells the adopters they reserve the right to place the animal with whoever they feel can provide the best home rather than "first come first served". This procedure is a little more work for the staff, but its important to allow every opportunity for a good adoption.

**Situation:** If the animal is euthanized before being made available for adoption, the staff may find it uncomfortable to explain what happened to the animal.

**Solution:** If the animal must be euthanized for health or behavior reasons before it can be made available for adoption, the public should be told the truth.

**Situation:** The shelter staff hopes to reduce the spread of disease by preventing people from touching the animals.

**Solution:** The major causes of disease in shelters are poor air quality, lack of daily sanitation and poor animal health care, including lack of daily observation. Keeping the public from touching an animal does not solve the problem of disease transfer because the staff is constantly handling all animals each day during cleaning and feeding procedures.

We urge all shelters to keep their stray cat and dog kennels open to the public. To be able to have safe, viewable stray kennels, the shelter should also have isolation and quarantine kennels for unfriendly dogs and bite cases and rooms for cat isolation. These kennels and rooms can be viewed by the public for identification through glass windows but they cannot touch the animals. In addition, there should be some isolation kennels for sick or injured animals completely out of public view.



### **C. How To Prevent The Euthanasia of Any Lost Pet Coming Into The Shelter**

Another extremely important area of preventative programming is ID tags. There should be an organized effort to get all animals in the San Luis Obispo Co. area tagged with a owner ID tag or dog license. Microchip ID's are also a terrific owner ID system, but a collar and tag can get the animal back to its owner without the need for the animal going to the shelter.



***Animals with owner ID tags will always be safe if they are lost. It is sad to know that many pets are destroyed because they had no identification.***

A free tag and collar program for the general public should be considered by the County of San Luis Obispo. This program would be implemented by volunteer school age children and adult volunteers setting up tables at their schools and in shopping malls and giving away free ID tags in a "Save our Pets" campaign.

A donor could probably be found to finance the modest cost of the numbered tags. (The tag should contain either the shelter phone, plus an identifying number or, better yet, the owners name, address and phone. There are free engraving machines available with the purchase of tags.) Certificates for a free collar at the shelter can also be given away with the tag. This certificate encourages people to visit the new shelter and see the animals for adoption.

For this program to succeed, a well planned campaign conducted by motivated volunteers is necessary. A half hearted attempt will not come close to getting all pets tagged. Every animal adopted at the shelter should also be fitted with a collar and tag before it walks out the door of the shelter.

The simple fact is, If every pet in the community is wearing an owner ID tag, no lost animal would need to be euthanized.

Additionally, these pet owners names can go into a data base and they can be mailed annual dog license renewals (plus newsletters).

#### **D. Emergency After Hours Animal Receiving, Rescue and Care**

The shelter presently has night drop-off cages for after hours. These are not satisfactory because complete background information is not usually received. The animal could have recently bitten or have temperment problems that are not revealed. For these reasons, we recommend shelters have a staff person on duty until about 10 p.m. to handle incoming strays or injured animals. All shelters should also have immediate and assured night and weekend emergency rescue and pickup service availably for injured animals. This can be handled by the same staff person who is on night duty. This position should be rotated among day staff.

### **E. Humane Euthanasia Methods Used Exclusively**

The goal of every shelter is to return lost animals to their owners and find good homes for the balance of the animals. Unfortunately, there will be a surplus of animals that are not adopted for health or behavior reasons or a simple surplus caused by uncontrolled breeding.

For the animals that must be euthanized, it must be performed by a veterinarian or veterinarian trained individual using injection of sodium pentobarbital. This is the only truly humane method and it is important this procedure be verified and re-verified on a regular basis as being handled correctly.

### **F. Responsible Pet Owner Education Program to Solve Future Problems.**

The remodeled shelter for San Luis Obispo County should continue to expand its education programs to reach out into the community promoting a message of responsible pet ownership along with humane treatment of all animals. One very beneficial education program is obedience classes for pet owners.

The basic underlying message the education program promotes is the importance of all pet owners spaying and neutering all family pets. The other component of the program is to educate in basic, proper and humane animal care, feeding, housing and health care.

## V. Summary and Recommendations

The County of San Luis Obispo is faced with the need to expand and remodel its present animal control shelter so as to better serve the needs of the citizen population and their animals. The present shelter, located at 855 Oklahoma Ave. is inadequate in cat holding areas and outdated dog holding areas. The building was constructed in 1972 and had expansions in the 1997 and 2002. Unfortunately, the expansion did not address all of the needs and some original building design decisions were not the best.

The cat quarters are the most in need of improving. Presently there are three windowless rooms for cat cages. These are unappealing to the visiting public and have no provisions for cat community adoption rooms.

An entirely new cat wing could be built on the left side replacing the existing two cat cage rooms. This addition would give the cats two

large community rooms, a kitten community room plus new larger caged cat stray and adoption rooms.



***New Cat Community rooms with lots of natural window light will allow cats to be displayed in a home setting.***



There is also a real need to improve the dog kennels. The present kennels are noseey, difficult to clean and have no central HVAC system to exchange inside air with fresh outside air .



***This is a remodeled “Jumbo Size” dog kennel to house two compatible dogs together. It has heated floors and germicidal floor finishes.***

The present kennels do not have all of the latest equipment and finishes available for shelters built today. These new finishes such as sound absorbing waterproof ceilings, better lighting, epoxy bacteria proof floor coverings, new kennel gates, automatic waterers, air purification systems and porcelain “stone look” tile floors in the kennel walkways would be installed during the remodel of the present kennels and the new kennel additions.

We are suggesting that the old kennels be completely updated including new HVAC systems. If the suggested new dog kennel wing is built, it would then allow vacating part of the old kennel area for remodeling without having to reduce animal numbers or disrupt

the ability of the shelter to function. If the new kennel wing is not built, the existing kennel will need to be remodeled one group of runs at a time to avoid greatly reducing holding capacity.

Another area that could benefit from remodeling and expansion would be the public lobby and intake area. The exterior entrance to the kennels with its locked door and need to summon someone to the window to let a visitor in, is a very poor design. We have included this space as having priority in our proposal because it adversely affects the number of visitors and potential adoptions.

The County of San Luis Obispo has a present site that will allow for the planned expanded public reception on the building front and the suggested cat room additions to be located on the left side.

The present site is located near a thoroughfare and passing traffic but cannot be seen from the highway. Visibility to passing traffic is one qualification that has great impact on a shelter's ability to increase visitors and increase adoptions. For that reason we suggest installing large signs at the highway turnoff to help identify the shelter location. Also, improving night lighting for the building, along with lighted front signage will help identify the shelter.

We believe the County of San Luis Obispo should plan for an expanded, remodeled building of approximately 12,019 square feet (phase 1-3) in order to provide expanded and updated cat holding and adoption facilities and remodeled dog kennels. The larger building will allow County of San Luis Obispo to present animals to

the public in the most attractive, healthy and appealing manner to increase adoptions.

Animal shelter remodeling today is quite different from how buildings were completed just ten years ago. Today a remodeled shelter is a specialized structure that includes disease control provisions, special air purification systems, specialized plumbing designs and well-designed, long-lasting kenneling equipment. A well-designed shelter is no longer a bare warehouse structure with chain link cages that may have been considered acceptable in the past.

The expanded building for San Luis Obispo should be built of long-lasting, easy to maintain materials. The design should include the latest in equipment and finishes to allow it to be easily cleaned and disinfected for the health of the animals. There should be sound control and sound deadening materials used to keep the building quiet inside and to keep noise from disturbing surrounding homes.

Based on the remodeling of similar buildings in comparable cost areas around the country, we estimate the recommended expanded and remodeled (phases 1 -3) will cost \$801,818. Once site work, walks, A&E fees, and permits are added, the final construction budget for phases 1 - 3 will be approximately \$962,181.

In the future as funds are available, phases 4 - 7 can be constructed to add new indoor/outdoor dog kennels, new animal intake, new administrative addition and new sally port. The costs for these additions is estimated at \$1,174,175. Site work, walks, A&E fees and permits will bring the total to \$1,409,010. These costs

projections are early estimate and will need to be adjusted as the project scope is fully defined.

The advantage of a remodeling project is that the project scope can be adjusted to meet the available budget. If this budget is too large, we can eliminate or downsize some of the planned spaces to

reduce  
costs.



***New attractive kennels and play yards will present the animals attractively to help assure finding homes for all adoptable animals.***

There is a strong feeling among the general public and people who support humanely run animal control shelters that facilities need to be designed to address irresponsible animal ownership problems and irresponsible pet breeding. It is felt these problems should be countered with remedial programs of spay and neuter requirements, education, enforcement of progressive ordinances and well promoted adoption programs, rather than shelters being forced to destroy many of the animals received.

The County of San Luis Obispo already has many of these important programs underway and is to be commended for doing an excellent job. The proposed remodel will allow the shelter to function much more efficiently and do an even better job for the

citizens and animals. The planning and design of the remodeled building will be critical for the shelter to succeed in its future goals.

If the building is attractive and enjoyable for the public to visit, it will encourage visitors and increase adoptions and returns of lost animals. Also, if the building is designed to keep the animals healthy and displayed in an attractive manner, it will mean increased satisfied adoptions and a public that will support and be proud of the County of San Luis Obispo animal control program .

If we can answer any questions in relation to this study, please call directly at 831-722-3253. Once the Study is reviewed and the County staff have decided on the desired budget level and scope of the expanded and remodeled building, we will be able to proceed with the floor plan layout of the building based on the recommendations in this Study.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Meade

Director of Planning and Design

*"Shelter Planners of America"*